Responsible Pet Ownership/Animals Have Feelings Too!

**Objective:** To teach kids about responsible pet ownership, to recognize situations of animal cruelty, and about how to prepare for new pets.   
  
**Materials:**

* “Be Kind to Animals” flashcards
* Animals’ Needs List (included here)
* Friends For Life handout
* The Right Path for Pets handout
* Writing utensils and paper

**Warm-Up**1. How do we choose our pets? Begin by asking students how they received their pets. Were they gifts? Did they find them? How long have they had them?  
2. Then talk about how they care for their animals. How did they prepare for ownership?   
3. Guide them through the Right Path for Pets handout. This will introduce them to spaying/neutering and veterinarian recommended tips for preparing for owning pets.

**Presentation of New Material**1. Begin by discussing the problem of homeless animals in Ukraine. In Kyiv, there are between 25,000 and 40,000 stray dogs. Do the students see many stray dogs and cats in their town, too? What do they think this means for these animals?   
2. Start a list on the board of problems that come from many stray animals. Have the students add their ideas. Problems can include unhealthy, unhappy animals, continued overpopulation, disease, euthanasia, and animal attacks.   
3. Now start a separate list on WHY there are so many stray animals. What leads to this problem? Include things like irresponsible owners, not spaying or neutering animals.   
4. End with a last list of how to combat this problem. Include ideas like spaying/neutering your pets, taking care of pets for their whole lives, keeping animals indoors, and being kind to animals while encouraging others to be kind.

**Practice of New Material**1. Pass out Be Kind to Animals flashcards. Have the students explain each picture. Ask them for each one: What is wrong with the picture? How is the animal feeling? How would you feel in this same situation?   
2. Break the students into four groups (one for each situation). Have them each create a 1 minute skit to illustrate the dangers in pet neglect and how a responsible owner should act in that situation. Have them present the skits for the entire class.

**Application of New Material**1. Have the students make a list of things that all animals (including humans!) need to have happy and healthy lives. To get them started, you may want to give them the different categories from the Animals’ Needs list and have them fill in what they think is appropriate for each one.   
2. Present the Animals’ Needs list to students. See how close it is to what they wrote and discuss the importance of each thing. How close are they to human needs?   
3. Discuss the idea of animal cruelty. Have the students look back at the situations and how they lead to overpopulation and many stray animals. Is this animal cruelty? Make two lists: Cruelty to Humans and Cruelty to animals. Have students fill in the lists. How similar are they? Ideas for the list: neglect, improper shelter, little food or water, hitting, irritating to get a reaction.   
4. Short discussion: Why are people cruel to animals? They may not know they’re being neglectful, or they may be taking out their own anger on something helpless. Make sure the students understand that animal cruelty isn’t a game; it is a sign of a much deeper problem and that it is their duty to stop it.

**Conclusion**1. Look at the Friends for Life handout. How does this stop animal cruelty?   
2. As a last discussion, talk about how students can help the animals in their community. Tell them they are doing their part just by treating their animal right.

**Animals’ Needs List**  
Physiological Needs: feeding, warmth, light  
Environmental Needs: a home for rearing young or safety from predators  
Health Needs: being able to carry out life’s processes  
Behavioral Needs: opportunities to build nests, hibernate, dig, scratch,   
Social Needs: being solitary or in a group  
Psychological Needs: preventing boredom, providing stimulation